

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 318 880

CE 054 675

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TITLE Substance Abuse in the Workplace: Implications for
Trade & Industry Education.
PUB DATE Dec 89
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Trade and Industry
Research Forum, American Vocational Association
Convention (Orlando, FL, December 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports -
Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Policy; Educational Practices; Health
Education; Health Promotion; *Prevention; Program
Implementation; Secondary Education; *Substance
Abuse; *Teacher Role; *Trade and Industrial Teachers;
Work Environment

ABSTRACT

Abuse of alcohol and other drugs has affected the U.S. workplace, diminishing the nation's productivity, reducing its competitive advantage, and threatening the safety of its workers. Individual employees and their families have experienced tragic economic and emotional losses. Some public policies have been implemented, and some treatment measures are encouraging. More employers are providing assistance programs. However, the real solution must rest on prevention. Trade and industry educators must play an important role in the substance abuse solution. Four activities are suggested: (1) engage in school policy formation on substance abuse; (2) enforce school policy on substance abuse; (3) integrate knowledge of substance abuse into the curriculum; and (4) instill attitudes that foster the maintenance of a drug-free workplace. (KC)

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SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE WORKPLACE: IMPLICATIONS
FOR TRADE & INDUSTRY EDUCATION

Presented to the
TRADE & INDUSTRY RESEARCH FORUM

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December 1989

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Substance Abuse in the Workplace: Implications
for Trade & Industry Education

Substance abuse "Is it an issue in the American workplace?" Does the trade and industry teacher have a role to play in the matter of substance abuse? The obvious answer to both questions is yes. A foundation for this response and clarification of the teacher's role is the focus of this paper.

Substance abuse has become the accepted term to cover use of illicit drugs (non-medical purposes) such as cocaine, crack, heroin, marijuana, etc., and abuse of the legal beverage alcohol. While alcohol is legally sold, it can become an abused substance when it alters one's rational functioning or when the user is underage. Therefore, problems reviewed in this paper include alcohol and other drugs.

Nonalcohol drug abuse costs America \$60 billion a year . . . that is more than the combined profits of the Fortune 500 companies.

\$136 billion dollars is lost to the American economy through alcohol abuse alone (Burke, 1988).

These incredible facts denote real and very substantial losses to America's economy. But, these aggregate facts shroud details of the problem in terms of individual and industrial losses. One must examine substance abuse from the perspective of the labor force.

- o 1 of every 5 workers is directly affected by substance abuse.
- o Absenteeism is up to 16 times greater for substance abusers.
- o Workers' compensation is 5 times greater for substance abusers.

- o Sick leave is 10 times greater for substance abusers' family members.

Cocaine in the Workplace. For most of the last decade, cocaine has had a major and increasing impact on the nation's economy. It has effected over 17% of the total population (Public Health Service, 1989). The percentage of effected workers is higher in the 18-35 category. While an encouraging decline has occurred over the last three years, a more ominous threat is building . . . crack, a cheaper and more potent form of cocaine. Unlike alcohol which may require more than a year to develop an addiction, cocaine/crack affects the user quickly and is known to become additive in as little as two uses. These are very serious additive drugs which control a worker's productivity and safety as well as the safety of others. How prevalent is cocaine in the workplace?

- o 1 out of 11 workers use cocaine at least once a month.
- o 3 out of 4 abusers use cocaine on the job.
- o 1 out of 2 abusers are involved in the sale of cocaine on the job.

Alcohol in the Workplace. Alcohol is the major drug of choice and alcohol abuse has reached catastrophic proportions nationally. While the percentage of use in the total population is 53%, use in the 18-25 age group is 65% and use is 25% in the 12-17 age group, a group for whom alcohol is illegal (Public Health Service, 1989). Alcohol is deeply ingrained in our society and mass media spends millions of dollars encouraging its use. For many persons, this use does not present a problem. However, the effects of those who suffer from alcohol addiction can be devastating. In addition, alcohol is considered a gateway drug. That is, the first abuse of alcohol is highly correlated with the eventual

abuse of other drugs. Sustained use of alcohol certainly has a major detrimental affect on users.

- o 3 out of 10 adolescents have a problem with alcohol.
- o 1 out of 15 children will become alcoholics while still in their youth.
- o 1 out of 2 cases of marital violence is alcohol related.
- o 1 out of 3 cases of child molestation is alcohol related (Bowen, 1988).
- o 25,000 Americans lose their lives because of drunk drivers . . . that's 500 deaths/week, 71 deaths/day.
- o 42% of the fatal alcohol related deaths are in the age group 18-24 (Fairbanks Hospital, 1989).

Federal and state governments have responded, though modestly in some people's view, to this crisis and its impact on the workplace. At the federal level the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 was passed. This Act requires employers to implement and circulate a drug-abuse policy, establish drug-free awareness programs, and take steps to identify and deal with employees convicted of drug-related, work-related crimes. Employers with a federal contract of \$25,000 or more and schools and community colleges with grants of any amount are affected by this law (Mensel, 1989).

While specific programs such as drug testing, monitoring of non-work-related drug use, compulsory education programs for employees, or assumption of treatment costs by employers are not mandated by the law, many firms have implemented such programs. Twenty-seven (27%) percent of the firms in a national survey conduct or sponsor in-plant training about substance abuse. Twenty-five (25%) percent of the firms conduct drug testing with probable cause, 9% of the firms routinely drug test all existing employees, while 14% drug test new applicants (Schreier, 1988).

State governments have enacted legislation to encourage employers to become proactive in the fight against substance abuse in the workplace. The Indiana General Assembly, for example, enacted S507 which will take effect on January 1, 1990. This legislation will provide a tax credit (incentive) to business firms who establish counseling in drug abuse problems, education for employees about substance abuse by children, and treatment referral services. The incentive is 25% of the tax but not more than one million dollars per firm (Senate, 1989).

Among business firms the most dramatic response has been the operation of Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). In a 1987 national survey of firms, 65% had EAPs compared to 38% in 1986 (Schreier, 1988). Ninety (90%) percent of the Fortune 500 Companies had employee assistance programs. However, firms of less than 250 employees, by and large, have not established EAPs (Burke, 1988).

The tenets of the Employee Assistance Programs are very important. While the EAP is sponsored by the firm and, in fact, is the embodiment of company policy, it is based on confidential counseling and referral. The employee's supervisor is not supposed to act as a therapist but to concentrate on the employee's work performance. Unions have a role to play but everyone "stays in their appropriate area of expertise" giving the employee freedom to address his/her substance abuse problem (Miller & Sturdevant, 1984). Employee Assistance Programs depend on referral of employees, including self, and rely upon voluntary participation. Therefore, not all employees take advantage of the program nor does the program always affect employees as soon as a need arises.

Given these limitations, however, examine the impact of an Employee Assistance Program from a medium size manufacturing firm in the automotive component arena. Information presented in the table includes Pre-EAP and Post-EAP work hours lost, company/employee costs for these hours. The 21 employees averaged 54 days lost in 1987 and 9 days lost in 1988 or losses of \$4,160 compared to \$693 (see Table 1). This substantial improvement of 83% in job performance was attributable to intervention through the EAP.

It should be noted that these are limited costs that include only lost earnings. The real costs to industry include poor product quality, increased product cost which narrows the industry's competitive position, increased insurance costs, operating cost of special programs, increased supervisory costs, etc. Related costs include family services, unemployment insurance, law enforcement, criminal justice, personal insurance, etc. These related costs for the 21 employees have not been calculated.

Particularly note the dramatic turn-around for employees #5, 6, 7, 9, 13, 14, and 15. According to one of these employees, the Employee Assistance Program not only saved his job, but it saved his life. Saving jobs and saving lives are really what is at stake in the substance abuse problem. The Employee Assistance Program offers some hope for the future. However, the eventual solution must rest upon prevention not treatment.

Implications for Trade and Industry Education

Trade and industry education has a 90 year history of preparing semi-skilled, skilled, and technical workers for the nation's work forces. This history of accomplishment is based on many tenets, not the least of which are a curriculum based on occupational relevance and a teaching corp of

Table 1

Substance Abuse Related Costs and Cost Savings Attributed to a
Employee Assistance Program for a Medium Size Manufacturing Firm

Employee	Referral Source	Problem	Pre EAP		Post EAP	
			Hours Lost	Cost \$	Hours Lost	Cost \$
1	Union	Alc/Emo	733	7,091	297	2,872
2	Self	Alc	89	861	0	0
3	Self	Alc/Emo	238	2,301	0	0
4	Mgt	Alc	252	2,437	62	600
5	Union	Drug	1,309	12,658	0	0
6	Union	Alc	952	9,204	20	193
7	Union	Alc/Emo	496	4,796	0	0
8	Self	Legal	139	1,340	40	387
9	Self	Legal	456	4,410	0	0
10	Self	Alc/Emo	88	851	30	290
11	Self	Alc/Emo	56	542	16	155
12	Self	Fam/Alc	224	2,166	194	1,876
13	Self	Alc/Drg	395	3,820	0	0
14	Union	Alc/Drg	1,350	13,055	64	619
15	Super	Abs	556	5,377	0	0
16	Union	Alc/Emo	546	5,281	360	3,481
17	Fam	Drug	372	3,596	168	1,625
18	Fam	Alc	233	2,256	63	609
19	Self	Alc	80	774	64	619
20	Self	Fam/Alc	65	629	0	0
21	Self	Legal	405	3,920	127	1,228
Total			9,034	\$87,355	1,505	\$14,554

experienced professionals. A hallmark of our profession has been its ability to reflect state-of-the-art content consistent with industrial needs. We have consistently tempered our programs with in-depth learning of generalizable content. Thus, the graduates of our programs possess technical skills and adaptable attitudes.

The substance abuse crisis, however, presents a new set of challenges not only to industry but to our classrooms. What is our role in this so-called "war against drugs?" As educators, what can we do to sustain our partnership with business and industry?

Clearly, educators have a role. It is incumbent upon all T&I educators to acquire a sound knowledge about substance abuse and to monitor carefully industry's response to this problem. With this background, T&I educators should fulfill four important functions.

(1) Engage in school policy formation on substance abuse. The immediate goal is to create drug-free schools. The goal involves setting specific operational policies, delineating consequences, clarifying faculty roles, developing procedures, informing all persons concerned about the policies, and building essential community supporting networks. These activities will involve careful deliberation among faculty, administrators, and board members. Sound knowledge and long term commitment are essential.

The T&I educators bring a unique and critical perspective to the deliberations. While knowledge and commitment to youth and young adults is shared with other faculty, T&I educators' knowledge of business/industry and their concern for the graduates' economic interest are special. These insights must be brought to the deliberations on policy formation.

(2) Enforce school policies on substance abuse. Teachers' enforcement role is complex, but we can glean a perspective from the Employee

Assistance Programs. Namely, understand and remain within the role specified for teachers. This role must be developed within legal limits and it will involve several key dimensions.

- o Enforcement of substance abuse policy violation must be strictly and consistently maintained. If the policy says that teachers are to report any incident of substance use or sale on campus, then that action must be reported.
- o Detection of substance users is a very likely responsibility. Educators must be trained to do this.
- o Referral of substance users to the appropriate person is critical. Again, drawing upon industry's perspective, the user needs help and the sooner the recognition process and treatment service begin, the more likely the student can gain control of his/her life.

(3) Integrate knowledge of substance abuse into the curriculum. A comprehensive examination of the curriculum is essential and revisions must go well beyond incorporating a unit on substance abuse. Our laboratories have always simulated industrial environments and this concept is as appropriate to attitude development and company policy learning as it is to equipment and production procedures.

The cornerstone of a sound curriculum on substance abuse is its development of "life skills," namely, learning how to make decisions and realizing the consequences of those decisions.

Life skills involve learning how to set goals, cope with stress, develop options, reject inappropriate options, solve problems and emphasize healthier life styles. The T&I laboratories are ideally suited for developing these concepts. While many educators have been incorporating life skills into their curricula, we cannot assume we are adequately addressing the problem. A systematic and conscientious approach is called for. This emphasis on life skills not only addresses substance abuse but insures responsibility in all decisions facing our students.

More responsible decision-making ultimately leads to increased productivity in the workplace. Knowledge alone is insufficient. The life skills component needs to include a varied approach which is well integrated into the technical and related components of the program. Practice which allows for reinforcement of learning is needed. Specifically:

- o Students need to learn how to make critical life decisions and experience the consequences dictated by the decisions.
- o Students must understand the effects of substance abuse and its impact on one's productivity.
- o Students must understand company policies and procedures and their implications for personal decisions.

(4) Instill attitudes that foster the maintenance of a drug free workplace. T&I educators are in a pivotal role. They are the direct link between students and employers. The teachers' knowledge, insight, and ability to clarify the real world is critical to students and employers. It is the teacher's responsibility to accurately reflect the industrial policies that employers are establishing and implementing to insure drug free workplaces.

The years ahead are going to be very dynamic. New laws will be adopted by federal and state governments. Companies will be experimenting with many approaches to combat the substance abuse problem. Thus, education must keep abreast of new developments and accurately interpret the policies and procedures. It is as important to reflect industrial policies and practices about substance abuse as it is to teach industries technical skills. It will be negligent to do otherwise.

Summary

Abuse of alcohol and other drugs has affected America's workplace, diminishing our nation's productivity, reducing our competitive

advantage, and threatening the safety of our workers. Individual employees and their families have experienced tragic economic and emotional losses. While new public policies have been implemented and some treatment measures are encouraging, the real solution must rest on prevention.

Trade and industry educators must play an important role in the substance abuse solution. Four activities are suggested:

- (1) engage in school policy formation on substance abuse,
- (2) enforce school policy on substance abuse,
- (3) integrate knowledge of substance abuse into the curriculum, and
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